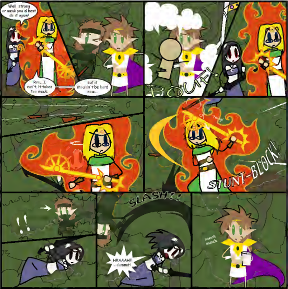
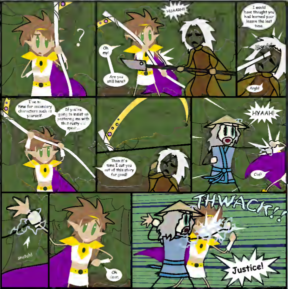
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #101

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Well strong or weak you'd best do it again!
Rrr... I can't, it takes too much.
But it shouldn't be hard now...
POUF!
Twing!
STUNT-BLOCK!
!!
SLASH!!
HRAAAH!! – dammit!
munch munch

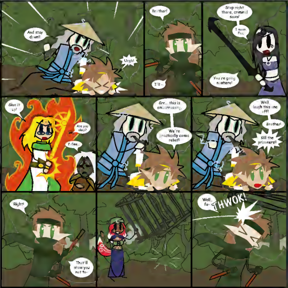
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #102

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


?
HUAARH!
Oh my!
Are you still here?
I would have thought you had learned your lesson the last time.
Krak!
Argh!
I've no time for secondary characters such as yourself.
If you're going to insist on pestering me with that rusty old spear...
Then it's time I cut you out of this story for good!
HYAAH!
Oof!
snatch!
Oh dear.
THWACK!!!
Justice!

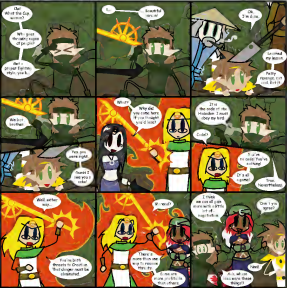
Keychain of Creation #103

by Padraig O Ruanai


And stay down!!
Urgh!
Brother!
I'll -
Stop right there, criminal scum!
I mean, Fae.
You're going nowhere!
Give it up!
Are you okay?
F-fine...
Grr... this is embarrassing.
We're practically comic relief!
Well, laugh this one off!
Brother!
Kill the prisoners!!
Right!
That'll show you not to-
Well, fu-
THWOK!

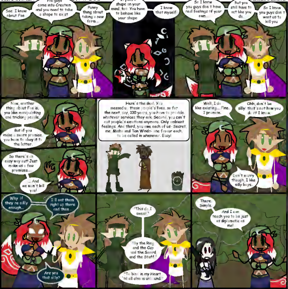
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #104

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Ow! What the Cup, woman?
Who goes throwing cages at people?
Get a proper fighting style, you b...
B...
... Beautiful person!
Ok, I'm done.
Learned my lesson.
Petty revenge, not cool. Got it.
We lost, brother.
Yes, you were right.
Guess I owe you a coke!
What?
Why did you come here if you thought you'd lose?
It is the code of the Haseshin. I must obey my lord.
Code!?
You've no code! You've nothing!
It's all a game!
True. Nevertheless.
Well, either way...
You're both threats to Creation. That danger must be eliminated.
Narenal?
There's more than one way to remove threats.
Some are more profitable than others.
I think we can all gain more with a little bit of... negotiation.
Don't you agree?
Nnn!!
Ack, whose idea were these things!?

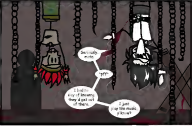
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #105

PADRAIG O RUANAI


See, I know about Fae.
You guys come into Creation and you need to take a shape to exist.
Funny thing about taking a new form...
It puts a shape on your mind, too. You have to behave like your shape.
I know that myself.
So I know you guys don't have real feelings of your own...
But you still have to act like you do.
So I know you guys don't want us to kill you.
Now, another thing about Fae is, you like manipulating and tricking people.
But if you make a sworn promise, you have to obey it to the letter.
So there's an easy way out! Just make us a few promises...
... And we won't kill you!
Here's the deal. You messed up these people's lives, so for the next, say, 100 years, you have to provide whatever services they ask. Second, you can't eat people's emotions anymore. Only ambient feelings. And third, you owe each of us- Secret, me, Misho and Ten Winds- one favour each, to be called in whenever. Easy!
Well, I do like existing... Fine. I promise.
Ohh, don't be silly: that's not how you do it! I know.
Don't worry though, I like silly boys.
Why if they're silly enough...
I'll eat them right up there and then...
Are you that silly?
"This do I swear."
"By the Ring and the Cup and the Sword and the Staff."
"To bind in my Heart 'til all else is unbound."
There. Simple.
And I can teach you to be just as diplomatic as me!

KoC #106

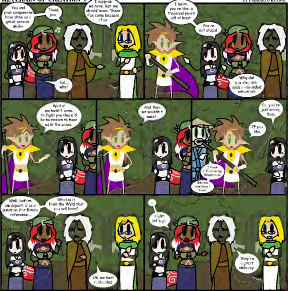
Deathknight Interlude Filler


Seriously, mate.
"pff"
I had no way of knowing they'd get out of there..
I just play the music, y'know?

by Padraig O Ruanai

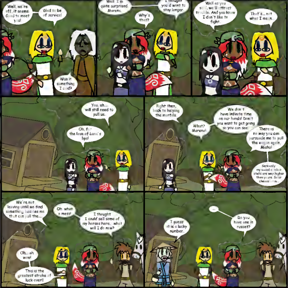
Keychain of Creation #107

by Padraig O Ruanai


You and your companions have done us a great service Misho
Thank you
But... why?
I suppose we have. But we should leave. These Fae came because of us
I mean, you're like a thousand years old at least
You're not stupid
Why did you step into such a one-sided situation?
Well if we hadn't come to fight you there'd be no reason to have us in the comic
And then we wouldn't exist
So, you're just crazy, then.
If you like.
I think I'll call in my favour now.
Get me something to drink.
Well, before we depart, I've a question. For future reference...
What is it from the Wyld that you sell here?
Oh, we hunt rockodiles.
...
Right, let's go.
They're a great delicacy

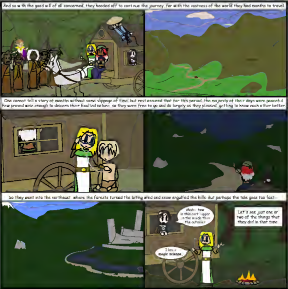
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #108

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Well, we're off, it seems. Good to meet you!
Glad to be of service!
Was it something I said?
Well I'm quite surprised Mareno.
I thought you'd want to stay longer.
Why's that?
Well as you said, we'll attract trouble. And you know I don't like to fight..
That's... not what I mean..
You, uh... will still need to pull us.
Oh, for the love of Luna's lips!
Right then, back to helping the mortals.
What? Mareno!
We don't have infinite time on our hands! Don't you want to get going so you can see
There is no way you can pursuade me to pull the wagon again, Misho!
Seriously my social combat stats are way higher than yours! Solar cheese in me...
We're not leaving until we find something besides me that can pull the...
Oh what a mess!
I thought I could sell some of my horses here.. what will I do now?
Oh... oh wow!
This is the greatest stroke of luck ever!!
...
I guess it is a lucky number.
Do you have one in russet?

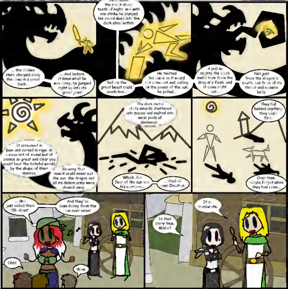
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #109

by Padraig O Ruanai


And so with the good will of all concerned, they headed off to continue the journey, for with the vastness of the world they had months to travel
One cannot tell a story of months without some slippage of time, but rest assured that for this period, the majority of their days were peaceful. Few proved wise enough to discern their Exalted nature, so they were free to go and do largely as they pleased, getting to know each other better.
So they went into the northeast, where the forests turned the biting wind and snow engulfed the hills. But perhaps the tale goes too fast...
Mishi, how is this cart bigger on the inside than the outside?
I know magic science.
Let's see just one or two of the things that they did in that time

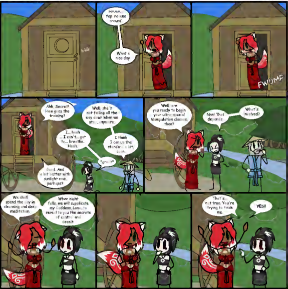
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #11

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAÍ


... the Golden Hero charged along the dragon's great back...
... And before it knew what he was doing, he jumped right up into its great jaws!
He dodged the razor-sharp teeth of night, and with one strike he plunged his sword deep into the dark steel within.
Before the great beast could crush him...
He twisted his blade so it would not come out and, calling on the power of the sun, he pulled...
A pull so mighty the black metal tore from the dragon's flesh, and it came right out...
Not just from the dragon's mouth, but from all its throat and massive belly.
It screamed in pain and cursed in rage in a voice not of sound but of silence so great and clear you could hear the hateful words by the shape of their absence.
Knowing that now it could never eat the sun the dragon and all its demon army were chased away.
The dark metal of its innards shattered into pieces and melted into weak pools of darkness
Which, for fear of the sun and his warriors...
...Fled all over Creation.
They hid behind anything they could find...
Over time, people forgot when they had come...
... And just called them "Shadows"
And they've been hiding from the sun ever since!
Ohh!
Wow
Is that story true, Misha?
It's... inaccurate.

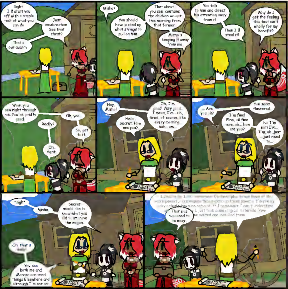
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #111

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI


k-klik
Hmmm. Yep no one around
What a nice day
FWUMP
Ahh, Secret! How goes the training?
Well, she's not falling all the way down when we stop... anymore.
I... hesh ... I can't... got to... breathe. Hesh.
groan
I think I can up the standard a bit, soon.
Good. And a bit better with sunlight now, perhaps?
Well, are you ready to begin your ultra-special Manipulation classes, then?
Nnn! That depends.
What's involved?
We shall spend the day in cleansing and deep meditation.
When night falls, we will supplicate my Goddess, Luna, to reveal to you the secrets of control and deceit.
That's so not true. You're trying to trick me.
YES!!

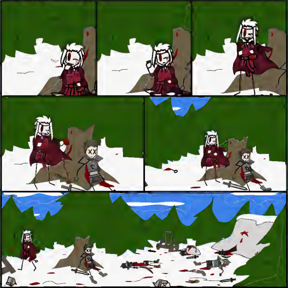
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #112

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Right I ll start you off with a simple test of what you can do
Just misdirection See that chest?
That s our quarry
M sho?
You should have picked up what strings to pull on him
That chest you see contains the ch cken we got this morning from that farmer
Misho s keeping it away from me
You talk to him and direct his attention away from it
Then I ll steal it!
Why do I get the feeling this test isn t wholly for my benefit?
Wow, you saw right through me. You're pretty good
Oh, yes.
Really?
So, get to it.
Oh, right
Hey, Misho!
Oh, I'm good! Very good. I mean, I'm... uh, tired, of course, like every morning... but... um...
Hello, Secret. How are you?
... Are you ok?
You seem flustered.
I'm fine! Fine, all fine here, uh... how are you?
No I'm not! I'm... I'm, uh, just ...just need to...
sigh
Misho.
Secret would like to know what you did to improve the wagon.
Oh that s easy!
You see both me and Marena can send things Elsewhere and although I m not as
[illegible] I still remember the principles to use some of the more powerful techniques that expand on those powers. I'm pretty lucky actually because some stuff I remember I can't understand [illegible] I just took some magical materials from [illegible] we waited and installed them
That was supposed to be easy.

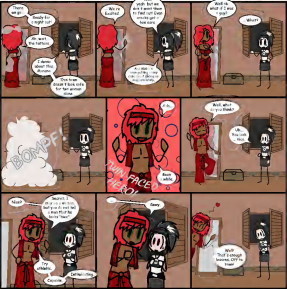
Keychain of Creation #113

by Padraic O Ruanai

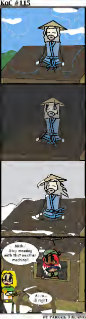


KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #114

by Padraig O Ruanai


There we go...
Ready for a night out!
Ah, wait, the tattoos
I dunno about this Marena
This town doesn't look safe for two women alone
...We're Exalted
Well yeah but we don't want them to find out! Even creaks get a few ears
And Misaki's been getting on my case about slicing up muggers lately.
Well ok what if I was a guy?
...What?
BOMPF!
Ahh...
TWIN-FACED HERO!
Been a while.
Well, what do you think?
Uh... You look ... nice.
Nice?
Secret, I may be a woman, but you do not tell a man that he looks "nice".
Try athletic.
Capable.
Intimidating.
...
Sexy.
Well! That's enough lessons. Off to town!

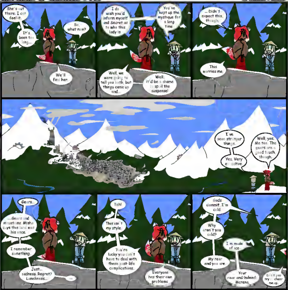
KoC #115


Misha! Stop messing with that weather machine!!
Aww... all right.

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI

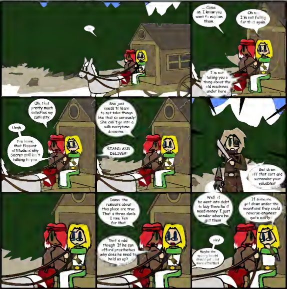
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #116

BY PADRAIC O KUANAI


She's out there. I can feel it.
It's been too long...
So, what now?
We'll find her.
I do wish you'd inform myself and Secret as to who this lady is
You've kept up the mystique for a long time
Well, we were going to tell you both, but things came up and...
Well.. it'd be a shame to spoil the suspense!
... Didn't expect this, though.
This worries me.
I've seen stranger things.
Yes. Very evocative.
Well, yes. Me too. The gears are a good touch, though.
Gears...
...Gears and mountains. Misha says this land was his once.
I remember something.
Just... sadness. Regret? Loneliness...
...
Bah!
This isn't my style.
You're lucky you don't have to deal with these past-life complications.
Everyone has their own problems
Gods dammit, I'm cold.
Why aren't you cold?
I'm made of ice.
My rear end you are.
Your rear end indeed, Morena.
Don't you try to cheer me up.

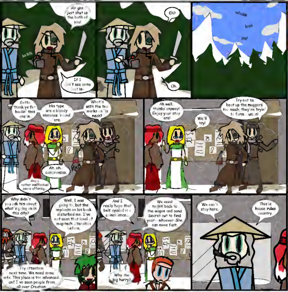
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #117

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


...
... Come on. I know you want to explain them.
Oh no. I'm not falling for that again.
I'm not telling you a thing about the old machines under here.
Oh, that pretty much satisfies my curiosity.
Urgh.
You know, that flippant attitude is why Secret still isn't talking to you.
She just needs to learn to not take things like that so seriously! She can't go into a sulk everytime someone
STAND AND DELIVER!
Get down off that cart and surrender your valuables!
Damn, the rumours about this place are true. That's three obols I owe Ten for that.
That's odd though. If he can afford prosthetics why does he need to hold us up?
Well, if he went into debt to buy them he'd need money. I just wonder where he got them.
If someone got down under the mountains they could reverse-engineer quite easily.
Hey!
Maybe the cyborg bandit should get a bit more attention!

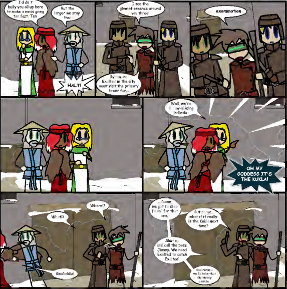
Keychain of Creation #118

by Padraig O Ruanai


Alr ght just shut up the both of you!
ka-klik
If I don't see some loot in-
Eh?
Oh.
whokk
krak
paf
Gotta thank ye fer haulin' this one in.
His type are a bloody niusance 'round 'ere.
What's with the two marks on 'is neck?
Ah, uh... compromise.
And a rather ineffectual peace offering...
Ah well, thanks anyway! Enjoy your stay 'ere!
We'll try!
Try not ta beat up the muggers too much, they're tryin' to form a union!
Why didn't you ask him about what's going on in this city?
Well, I was going to, but the implants on his back disturbed me. I've not seen that level of magitech alteration before.
Pay attention next time. We need some info. This place is too advanced and I've seen people from all over Creation
And I really hope that belt symbol is a coincidence...
We need to get back to the wagon and send Secret out to find your-- whoever. She can move fast.
Why the big hurry?
We can't stay here.
This is house rules country.

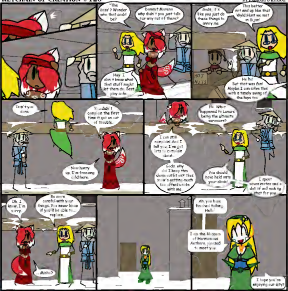
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #119

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI


I didn't bully you all up here to make a mess going too fast, Ten
But the longer we stay the-
HALT!
I see the glow of essence around you three!
By law, all Exalted in the city must visit the primary tower for...
examination
Well, we're all law-abiding individu-
OH MY GODDESS IT'S THE KUKLA!
What!?
Where!?
Skidaddle!
...Damn, we got to stop fallin' for that one.
But sarge, what if it really is the Kukla next time?
Shut up and call the boss, Jimmy. We need Exalted to catch Exalted.
And remind me to take that diplomacy course.

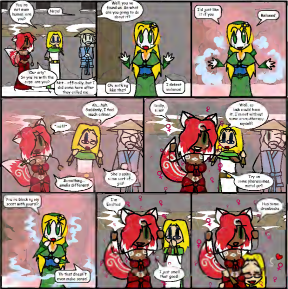
Keychain of Creation #120

by Padraig O Ruanai


"The Boss'? Wonder who that could be?
Dammit Marena why didn't you just talk our way out of there?
Hey I don't know what that stuff might let them do. Best play safe.
Gods, it's like you just do these things to annoy me
This better not end up like that Wyld Hunt we met in Sijan!
HOT NUTS
Ha ha! But that was fun! Maybe I can solve this with a timely swing of the hips too.
Don't you dare.
You didn't complain the first time it got us out of trouble.
Now hurry up. I'm freezing cold here.
Ha. What happened to Lunars being the ultimate survivors?
I can still complain! And I tell you, I've got lots to complain about.
Gods, why did I keep this damn outfit on? This snow's getting much too affectionate with me.
You should have held onto your cloak!
I spent seven motes and a dot of will making that for you
Oh, I know, I'm sorry.
Be more careful with your things. You never know if you'll be able to... replace...
... Misha?
Ah, you have finished talking. Hello!
I am the Blossom of Harmonious Aethers, pleased to meet you.
I hope you're enjoying our city?

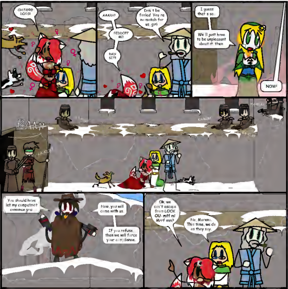
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #121

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


You're not even human, are you?
Nope!
"Our city" So you're with the cops, are you?
Not... officially, but I did come here after they called me.
Well, you've found us. So what are you going to do about it?
Oh, nothing like that!
I detest violence!
I'd just like it if you
Relaxed
Ah... huh. Suddenly, I feel much calmer.
sniff
Something... smells different!
She's using some sort of... gas!
Really, now?
Well, as luck would have it, I'm not without some aromatherapy myself!
Try on some pheremones, metal girl!
You're blocking my scent with yours!?
Th that doesn't even make sense!
I'm Exalted!
I just smell that good
Has some drawbacks

KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #122

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


OH F#@@ DOGS!!
AAARH!!
GEDOOFF ME!
BAD! SIT!!
Don t be fooled You re no match for us girl
I guess that s so.
We ll just have to be unpleasant about it then
NOW!
BAM!
KA-KLIK!
KA-KLIK!
You should have let my compatriot convince you
Now, you will come with us.
If you refuse, then we will force your compliance.
Ok, we can't escape from LOOK OU- mff m! Mrff mm?
No, Marena. This time, we do as they say.

KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #123: TEXT FILLER

by Padraig O Ruanai

How long has it been? I could look it up, but... no, accuracy is not important. Well over a thousand years though. And by Jupiter, who knows how many more it will be? Standing watch, all the time. The threats are everywhere; overt and subtle, violent and amiable, but all threats nonetheless.

I prefer the violent ones. They're more honest.

It's all for Creation. I remind myself of that, every day. Well, it's not like I would have had an easy life anyway. No family, no friends... not outside friends, anyway, and the inside friends, well, it's too hard to trust them. Not when you've seen the stuff you have to do yourself. But by Mercury, I wish I could get away from it all. But I can't get away, not if I bring it with me. And I can't leave it. No, never leave it. Not when I know what that could mean.

Knowing is the trouble.

Knowing is what got me where I am today. Knowing is what we're all about, really. And once you know, you can't stop knowing. Knowledge is power. If you have enough knowledge, power becomes duty. And nothing is more important than that duty. For duty we have lost, and for duty we have fallen. For duty we took, took lives, took responsibility, took scorn upon ourselves. And it's all by choice. Free will sits at the core of Exaltation. Oh, pressure can be applied, but it can be broken. You can choose to give up your will, but that, itself, is your choice. We choose to do whatever it takes to keep Creation safe. And we keep chooosing, every day. By Saturn, it never ends.

So not only am I saddled with all the normal duties (the paperwork! It haunts my dreams), I have this thing sitting on my hip every hour, every day, three months a season, five seasons a year. And Calibration. By Venus, I never get any rest at Calibration. Five days when every nut with a lock can get up in my face. Or my back, more often. Occasionally, my pants. Sometimes fun, but generally troublesome. Not tonight, world. I have a headache.

Can't sleep with both eyes shut. Can't die.

Can't pass it on, either. Anyone strong enough to protect it as well as me is canny enough to hide an agenda from me, too. Anyone less is too weak. More than a thousand years, and sometimes I don't think I'm strong enough to go much longer. You need millenia of experience and power to keep this thing safe. Hand on the hilt, eyes on the back of your head, ear to the ground, sniff the wind... various other metaphors. I'm the only one I can trust.

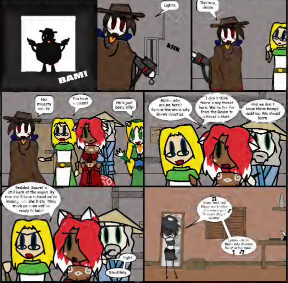
That's why I need to get involved.

My choice again. Got to get out, get messy, pull strings, lead the charge, step up to the plate, hands on, eye on the prize. I'm so tired. But I have a duty.

And by Mars, I'll keep on fighting for it.

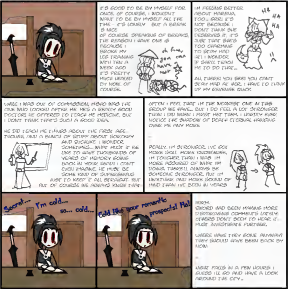
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #124

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


BAM!
Lights.
klik
This way, please.
Her majesty awaits.
You have a queen?
He's just being silly!
Misha, why are we here? By now the whole city knows about us.
I don't think there's any threat here. We're too far from the Realm to attract a Hunt.
And we don't know these beings abilities. We should learn.
Besides, Secret's still back at the wagon. By now she'll have noticed we're missing, and she'll stealthily track us down and be ready to help!
Right.
Stealthily.
Dansa med oss! Klappa era händer. Gör som vi gör! Ta några steg åt vänster.
Lyssna och lär Missa inte chansen Nu är vi här med...

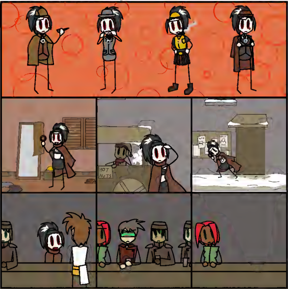
Keychain of Creation #125

by Padraig O Ruanai


IT'S GOOD TO BE BY MYSELF FOR ONCE. OF COURSE, I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE BY MYSELF ALL THE TIME - IT'S LONELY. BUT A BREAK IS NICE.
OF COURSE, SPEAKING OF BREAKS, THE REASON I HAVE ONE IS BECAUSE I BROKE MY LEG TRAINING WITH TEN A WEEK AGO. IT'S PRETTY MUCH HEALED BY NOW. OF COURSE.
oh fine, you can have next
I'M FEELING BETTER ABOUT MARENA, TOO... GRR! IT'S NOT BECAUSE I DON'T THINK SHE DESERVES IT, IT'S JUST THAT SHE'S TOO CHARMING TO STAY MAD AT! I WONDER IF SHE'LL TEACH ME TO DO THAT...
HA HA HA
AH, THERE! YOU SEE! YOU CAN'T STAY MAD AT HER. I HAVE TO THINK UP MY REVENGE QUICK.
WHILE I WAS OUT OF COMMISSION, MISHO WAS THE ONE WHO LOOKED AFTER ME. HE'S A REALLY GOOD DOCTOR! HE OFFERED TO TEACH ME MEDICINE, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S SUCH A GOOD IDEA.
HE DID TEACH ME THINGS ABOUT THE FIRST AGE THOUGH, AND A BUNCH OF STUFF ABOUT SORCERY AND SUCHLIKE. I WONDER SOMETIMES... WHAT MUST IT BE LIKE TO HAVE THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF MEMORY GOING BACK IN YOUR HEAD? I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE. HE MUST BE SOME KIND OF SUPERGENIUS JUST TO KEEP IT ALL STRAIGHT. BUT BUT OF COURSE WE ALWAYS KNEW THAT.
OFTEN I FEEL THAT I'M THE WEAKEST ONE IN THIS GROUP WE HAVE... BUT I DO FEEL A LOT STRONGER THAN I DID WHEN I FIRST MET THEM. I HARDLY EVER NOTICE THE SHADOW OF DEATH ETERNAL HANGING OVER ME ANY MORE.
REALLY. I'M STRONGER. I'VE GOT MORE SKILL, MORE KNOWLEDGE, I'M TOUGHER THAN I WAS. I'M MORE ASSURED OF WHAT I'M DOING. THERE'LL ALWAYS BE SOMEONE STRONGER. BUT I'M HEALTHIER AND MORE SOUND OF MIND THAN I'VE BEEN IN YEARS.
Secret... I'm cold... so... cold...
Cold like your romantic prospects! Ha!
HURM.
SWORD HAD BEEN MAKING MORE DISPARAGING COMMENTS LATELY. OTHERS DON'T SEEM TO HEAR IT. MUST INVESTIGATE FURTHER.
WHERE HAVE THEY GONE, ANYWAY? THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN BACK BY NOW.
NIGHT FALLS IN A FEW HOURS. I GUESS I'LL GO AND HAVE A LOOK AROUND THE CITY...

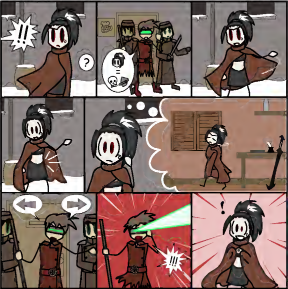
Keychain of Creation #126

by Padraig O Ruanai



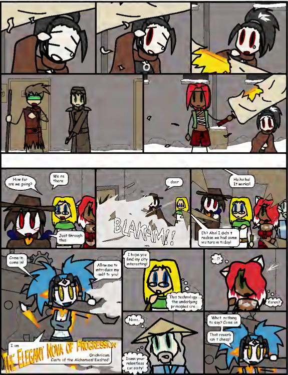
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #127

by Padraig O Ruanai



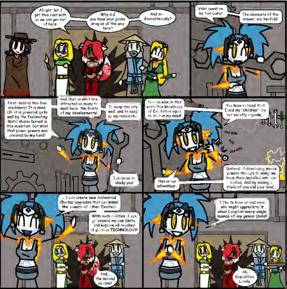
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #128

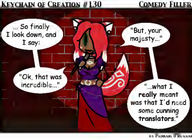
BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


How far are we going?
We're there
Just through this
...door
BLAKAM!!
Ha ha ha! It works!
Eh? Aha! I didn't realise we had some visitors in today!
Come in come in!
Allow me to introduce my-self to you!
I am
The Elegant Nova of Progression
...Orichalcum Caste of the Alchemical Exalted!
I hope you find my city interesting!
This technology the underlying principles are...
!?
Karen?
Nova...
Damn your relentless curiosity!
What, nothing to say? Come on
That reverb isn't cheap!

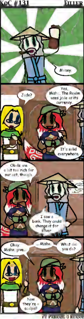
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #129

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Alright let's get this over with so we can get out of here
Why did you have your goons drag us all the way here?
And so... discourteously?
Valid question my fair Lunar.
The elements of the answer are twofold!
First, behold this fine machinery! It is mine. Oh, it is powered quite well by the fascinating Metal Manse buried in this mountain, but what that power powers was created by my hand!
And that is what has attracted so many to dwell here, the fruits of my developments!
To keep the city well, and to keep up my research...
I propose to study you!
No one else in this world has knowledge of Exaltation equal to that in my mind!
You have noticed that I and my "children" are not exactly organic...
ska-klik
klik
cha-klik
This is our advantage.
Instead of developing innate powers through training, we have them installed into our bodies. And by making a study of you and your kind...
... I can create new Alchemical Charms; upgrades that can mimic the powers of other Exalted!
With such abilities, I can go beyond my own limits, and explore all reaches of glorious TECHNOLOGY!
And... the second reason?
I like to have an audience who might appreciate it when I explain every single nuance of my genius plans!
Ah. Exposition. Lovely.


KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #130
COMEDY FILLER
"... So finally I look down, and I say:
"Ok, that was incredible..."
"But, your majesty..."
"...what I really meant was that I'd need some cunning translators."
BY PADRAIG O'RUANAI

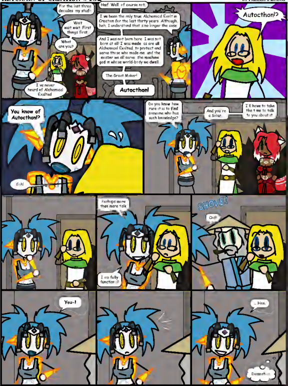
KoC #131 Filler


Money.
Jade?
Yes, Mishe. The Realm uses jade as its currency.
It's solid everywhere.
Obols are a bit too rich for our act, though.
I saw a bank. They could change it for silver
Okay. Mishe, give...
...Mishe.
What did you do?
Now they're a scalpel!

by Padraig Ó Ruanai

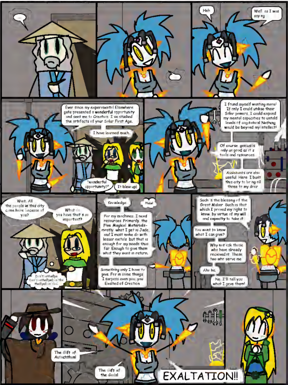
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #132

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI


For the last three decades my stud-
Wait wait wait First things first
What are you?
I've never heard of Alchemical Exalted
Hmf Well of course not
I've been the only true Alchemical Exalt in Creation for the last thirty years Although heh I understand that's no longer the case
And I was not born here I was not born at all! I was made as are all Alchemical Exalted to protect and serve those who made me and the master we all serve the machine god in whose world-body we dwell
The Great Maker!
Autocthon!
Autocthon!?
You know of Autocthon!?
Sah!
Do you know how rare it is to find someone who has such knowledge?
And you're a Solar
I'll have to take the time to talk to you about it
Perhaps more than mere talk
I am fully functional!
SHOVE!
Oof!
You-!
... Hee.
Damnation.

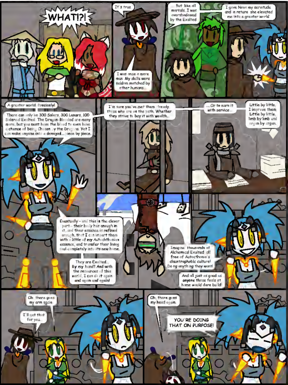
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #133

by Padraig O Ruanai


...
Heh
Well, as I was saying
Ever since my experimental Elsewhere gate presented a wonderful opportunity and sent me to Creation, I've studied the artifacts of your Solar First Age.
I have learned much.
"wonderful opportunity?"
It blew up!
I found myself wanting more! If only I could utilise their Solar powers, I could expand my mental capacities to untold levels of cogitation! Nothing would be beyond my intellect!
Of course, genius is only as good as it's tools and resources
Assistants are also useful. Here, I built this city to bring all three to my door
Wait. All the people in this city came here because of you?
What do you have that's so important?
Don'ttheEye Don'ttheEyeDon'the theEyeDon'the-
Knowledge.
Phew!
For my machines, I need resources. Primarily, the Five Magical Materials- mostly, what I get is Jade, and I must make do with lesser metals, but that is enough for my needs thus far. Enough to give them what they want in return.
Something only I have to give. For in some things I surpass even you, you Exalted of Creation
Such is the blessing of the Great Maker. Such is that which I proved my right to know, by virtue of my will and capacity to take it
You want to know what I can give?
Why not ask those who have already recieved it. These two who serve me
Aha ha.
No, I'll tell you what I gave them!
The Gift of Autochthon!
The Gift of the Gods!
EXALTATION!!

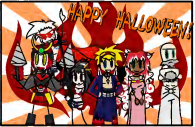
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #134

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


WHAT!?!
It's true
I was once a mere man. My skills were seldom matched by other humans...
...But like all mortals, I was overshadowed by the Exalted
I gave Neva my servitude and in return she elevated me into a greater world
A greater world. Precisely!
There can only be 300 Solars, 300 Lunars, 100 Sidereal Exalted. The Dragon-Blooded are many more, but you must have the blood to even have a chance of being Chosen by the Dragons. Yet I can make anyone into a demigod... piece by piece.
I'm sure you've met them already, those who are on the path. Whether they strive to buy it with wealth...
...Or to earn it with service...
Little by little, I improve them. Little by little, limb by limb and organ by organ.
Eventually - and this is the clever part - their body has enough in it, and their essence is refined enough, that I can impart them with a little of my Autochthonian essence, and transfer their living soul completely into its new home.
They are Exalted... By my hand!! And with the resources of this world, I can do it again and again and again!
Imagine thousands of Alchemical Exalted, all free of Autocthonia's claustrophobic culture! Doing anything they want!
And all just as good as anyone those fools at home would dare build!
Oh, there goes my arm again
I'll get that for you...
Oh, there goes my head again.
YOU'RE DOING THAT ON PURPOSE!

Keychain of Creation #135

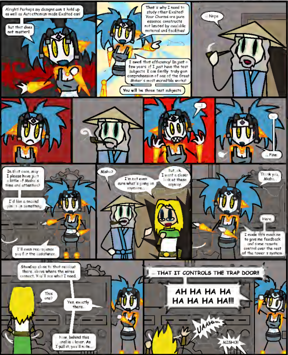
by Padraig O Ruanai


HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Who do you think we are?

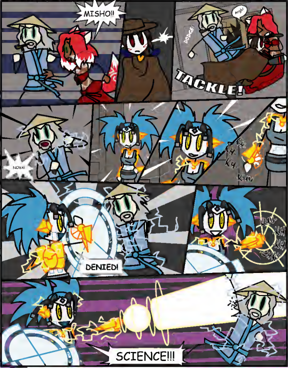
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #136

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Alright! Perhaps my designs can't hold up as well as Autocthonian made Exalted can!
But that does not matter!
That's why I need to study other Exalted! Your Charms are pure essence constructs not limited by available material and facilities!
I need that efficiency! In just a few years, if I just have the test subjects I can finally truly gain comprehension of one of the Great Maker's most incredible works!
You will be those test subjects
... Nope
...!
...
... Fine.
In that case, may I please have just a little of Misho's time and attention?
I'd like a second opinion on something.
I'll even recompense you for the assistance.
Misho?
I'm not even sure what's going on anymore...
But, ok. I want a closer look at these anyway.
Thank you, Misho.
Here.
I made this machine to give me feedback and some remote control over the rest of the tower's system.
Stand up close to that readout there, above where the wires connect. You'll see what I need.
This one?
Yes, exactly there...
Now, behind this panel is a lever. As I pull it, you'll note...
... THAT IT CONTROLS THE TRAP DOOR!!
AH HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!!!
UAAHH...
MISHO!!

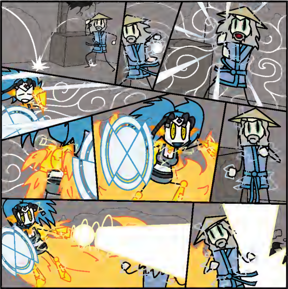
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #137

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


MISHO!!
Argh!
DODGE!
TACKLE!
NOVA!
KH-
KH-
KH-
KHV
DENIED!
KHU-
KH
KH
CHKU
SCIENCE!!!

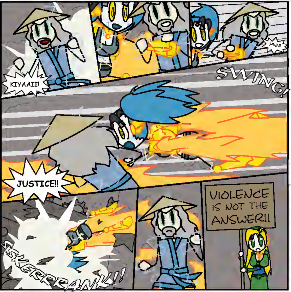
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #138

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI



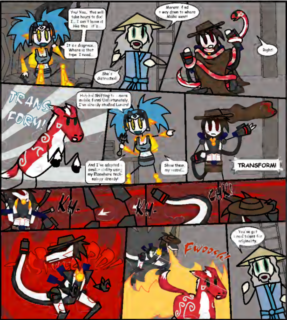
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #139

by Padraig Ó Ruanai


KIYAAII!
HNN!
SWING!
JUSTICE!!
SSKERRRANK!!
VIOLENCE IS NOT THE ANSWER!!

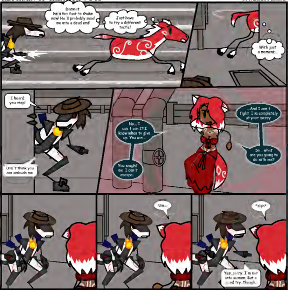
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #140

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


You! You... this will take hours to fix! I... I can't leave it like this... it's...
It's a disgrace. Where is that tape I need...
Marenn! Find a way down to where Misha went!
She's distracted!
Right!
TRANSFORM!
Heh-heh! Shifting to a more mobile form! Unfortunately, I've already studied Lunars!
And I've adopted a similar ability using my Elsewhere technology already!
Show them, my vessel...
TRANSFORM!
KH-
KH-
CHK!
Fwoosh!
You've got a real talent for originality.

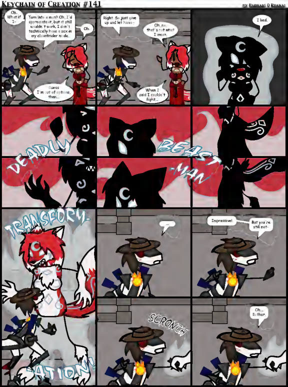
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #141

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Damn it he's too fast to shake now! He'll probably send me into a dead end!
Just have to try a different tactic!
With just a moment.
I heard you stop!
Don't think you can ambush me
No... I can't can I? I know when to give up. You win...
You caught me. I can't escape..
...And I can't fight. I'm completely at your mercy
So... what are you going to do with me?
Um...
sigh
Yes, sorry. I'm not into women. But a good try, though.

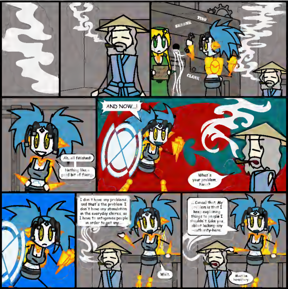
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #141

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Ok. What if I-
Turn into a man? Oh, I'd appreciate it, but it still wouldn't work. I don't technically have a sex in my clawstrider mode.
Oh.
Guess I'm out of options, then...
Right. So just give up and let Neve-
Oh, no, that's not what I mean.
When I said I couldn't fight...
I lied.
DEADLY
BEAST
-MAN
TRANSFORM
-ATION!
...
Impressive!
But you're still not-
SCRONCH
Oh... Bother.

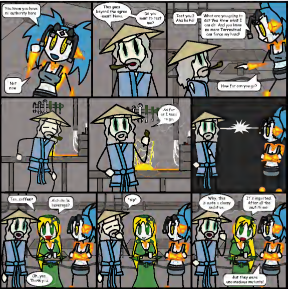
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #143

by Padraig O Ruanai


SKRONK
TINK
CLANK
Ah, all finished!
Nothing like a good bit of fixing.
AND NOW...!
What's your problem, Nevi?
I don't have any problems and that's the problem. I don't have any stimulation in the everyday chores, so I have to antagonise people in order to get any.
Wait.
...Cancel that. My problem is that I keep explaining things to people I shouldn't. Like you. ~~about lacking any authority here.~~
Must be hereditary.

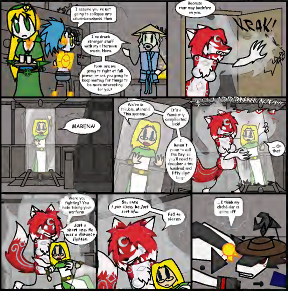
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #144

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


You know you have no authority here
Not now
This goes beyond the agreement Nova.
Do you want to test me?
Test you? Aha ha ha!
What are you going to do? You know what I can do. And you know no mere Terrestrial can force my hand!
How far can you go?
As far as I need to go.
Tea..coffee?
Alchoholic beverage?
Oh, yes. Thank you.
sip
Why, this is quite a classy sedative.
It's imported. After all the mutations-
But they were unconscious mutants!

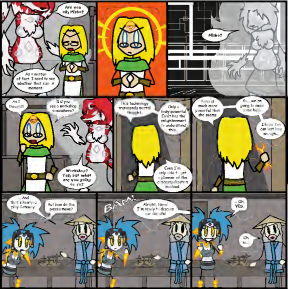
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #145

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


I assume you're not going to collapse into unconsciousness then
I've drunk stronger stuff with my afternoon snack, Nova.
Now are we going to fight at full power or are you going to keep waiting for things to be more interesting for you?
Because that may backfire on you.
KRAK!
MARENA!
We're in trouble, Marena! This system...
It's a fiendishly complicated lock!
I haven't room to call the Key, so you'll need to decipher a two hundred and fifty digit long-
SKREEYRRRNNNNAAA
... Or that
Were you fighting? You hate taking your warform
Just a short one. He was a distance fighter.
So, once I got close, he just sort of...
Fell to pieces.
... I think my cliché-dar is going off

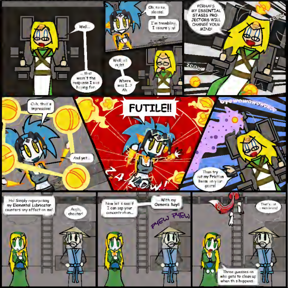
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #146

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Are you ok, Misho?
As a matter of fact I need to see whether that's so. A moment.
Misho?
As I thought!
Did you see a workshop somewhere?
Workshop? Yes, but what are you going to do?
This technology transcends mortal thought.
Only a truly powerful Exalt has the enlightenment to understand this.
Even I'm only able to get a glimmer of the conceptualization involved.
Nova is much more powerful than she seems.
So... we're going to need some help...
I hope Ten can last long enough...
...And that's how you play Gateway.
But how do the pieces move?
BAM!
Alright, Nova! I'm ready to discuss our dispute!
...Oh, YES.
Oh no...

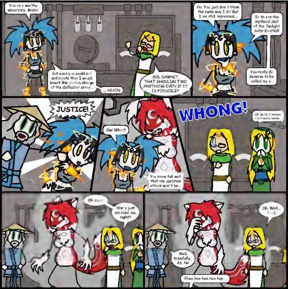
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #147

BY PADRAIG D RUANAI


Well...
...that wasn't the response I was hoping for.
Oh, no no, please!
I'm trembling, I assure you!
Well, all right.
Where was I...? Ah.
PERHAPS MY ESSENTIAL STASIS PROJECTORS WILL CHANGE YOUR MIND!
zeow
zeow
Ooh, that's impressive!
And yet...
FUTILE!!
ZA-KOW!
oyowowowowow
Then try out my Friction Beam on your gears!
Ha! Simply repurposing my Elemental Lubricator counters any effect on me!
Augh, cheater!
Now let's see if I can sap your concentration...
...With my Osmosis Ray!!
PYEW PYEW
That's not a membrane!
Three guesses on who gets to clean up when this happens.

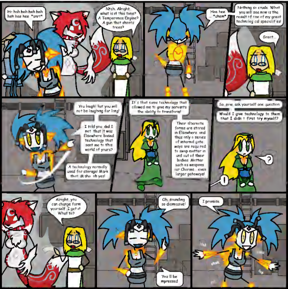
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #148

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


You're a worthy adversary, Misha!
But even you could not anticipate that I would invert the photon charge of the deflector array...
... AGAIN.
SOL DAMNIT THAT SHOULDN'T DO ANYTHING EVEN IF IT IS POSSIBLE!
Ha. You just don't think the same way I do! But I am still impressed.
So this is the mythical skill of the Twilight Solar Exalted!
You really do deserve to be called my s-
JUSTICE!
Ow! What?
You know full well that one surprise attack won't be...
WHONG!
Oh ok that makes a bit more sense.
THWUMP
Oh dear.
She's just unconscious, right?
Well, hopefully. Ah. No.
Oh. Well... Good.
Ehee hee hee hee hee...

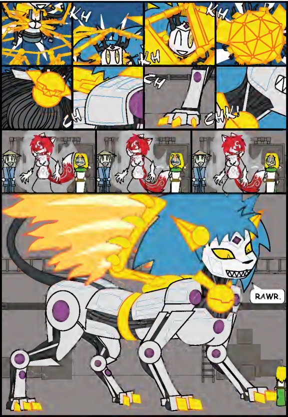
Keychain of Creation #149

by Padraig O Ruanai


Ho hah heh heh heh heh hee hee *snrt*
Ntch. Alright what is it this time? A Temperence Engine? A gun that shoots trees?
Hee hee *ahem*
Nothing so crude. What you will see now is the result of one of my great technological specialties!
Great...
You laugh! But you will not be laughing for long!
I told you did I not that it was Elsewhere based technology that sent me to this world of yours?
A technology normally used for storage! Mark that Misha oh yes!
It's that same technology that allowed me to give my servants the ability to transform!
Their alternate forms are stored in Elsewhere and thus only a series of internal gate ways are required to swap matter in and out of their bodies. Matter such as weapons our Charms... even larger gateways!
So now ask yourself one question.
Would I give technology to them that I didn't first try myself?
?
!
Alright you can change form yourself. I get it. What to?
Oh sounding so dismissive!
You'll be impressed
I promise
chak

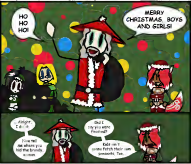
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #150

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


KH
KH
KH
KH
CH
CH
CH
CHK!
RAWR.

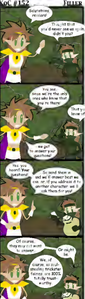
KoC #151: HOLIDAY FILLER

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


HO HO HO!
MERRY CHRISTMAS, BOYS AND GIRLS!
... Alright, I did it.
Now tell me where you hid the brandy, woman.
Did I say you were finished?
Kids ain't gonna fetch their own presents, Ten...

JOYOUS WINTER FESTIVAL!

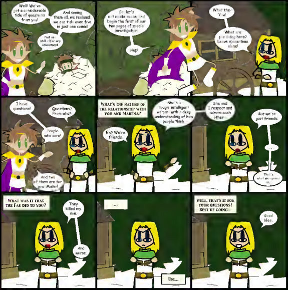
KoC #152 Filler


Salutations, readers!
Thought that you'd never see us again, didn't you?
You see, since we're the only ones who know that you're there
That you know of!
we get to answer your questions!
Yes you heard! Your questions!
So send them in and we'll answer best we can, or, if you address it to another character we'll ask them for you!
Of course, they may not want to answer.
Or might lie.
We, of course, as soul-stealing trickster fairies, are 100% totally trustworthy.

by Padraig Ó Ruanai

KoC #153 - Question Time 1

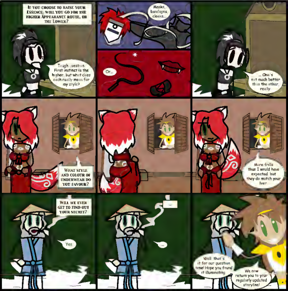
by Padraig O Ruanai



Well! We've got a considerable tide of questions from you!
And seeing them all, we realised we can't do even five in just one comic!
Not one still offer any amusement
So, let's not waste space, and begin the first of our two pages of special investigation!
Hup!
What the- You!
What are you doing here? Leave space-time alone!
I have questions!
Questions? From who?
People who care!
And two of them are for you Misha!
What's the nature of the relationship with you and Marena?
Eh? We're friends.
She's a tough intelligent woman with a deep understanding of how people think
She and I respect and admire each other
But we're just friends.
...
That's what we agreed on...
What was it that the Fae did to you?
They killed my son.
And worse.
...
Um...
Well, that's it for your questions! Best be going
Good idea.

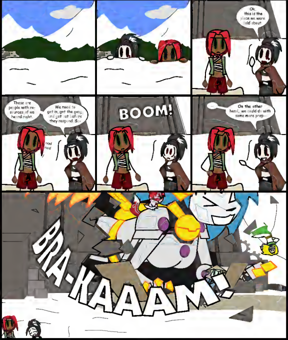
KoC #154 - Question Time 2

by Padraig O Ruanai


If you choose to raise your Essence, will you go for the higher Appearance route, or the Lower?
Tough question. First instinct is the higher, but what does each really mean for my style?
Masks, bandages, cloaks...
Or...
... One's not much better than the other, really.
What style and colour of underwear do you favour?
More frills than I would have expected but they do match your hair
Will we ever get to find out your secret?
Yes.
...
...
Well that's it for our question time! Hope you found it illuminating
We now return you to your regularly updated storyline!

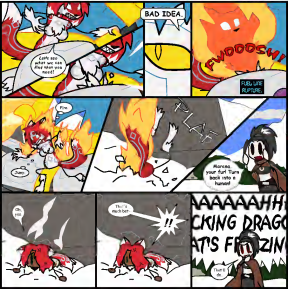
Keychain of Creation #155

by Padraig O Ruanai


Ok, this is the place we were told about.
These are people with resources, if we heard right.
We need to get in, get the gang and get out before they respond. So-
nod nod
BOOM!
...
On the other hand, we could do with some more prep-
BRA-KAAAM!

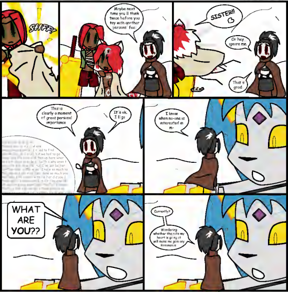
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #156

by Padraig O Ruanai


Let's see what we can find that you need!
BAD IDEA.
FWOOOSH!
FUEL LINE RUPTURE.
Fire.
Jump.
PLAF
Marena your fur! Turn back into a human!
Oh, yes.
That's much bet-
!!
AAAAAAHH!
CKING DRAGO
AT'S FR ZIN
That'll do.

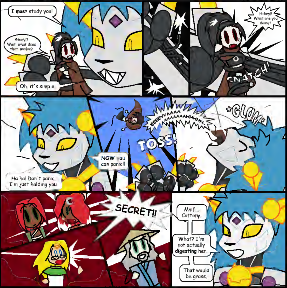
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #157

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


SHFFF!
Maybe next time you'll think twice before you toy with another persons' fee
SISTER!! ♡
Or hey ignore me.
That's good.
This is clearly a moment of great personal importance
It's ok. I'll go
I know when no-one is interested in m-
WHAT ARE YOU??
Currently?
Wondering whether the rate my heart is going at will make me gain any Resonance

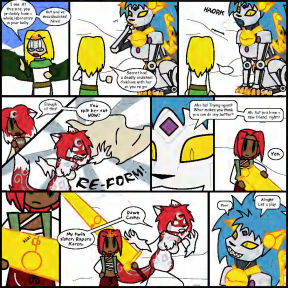
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #158

by Padraig O Ruanai


I **must** study you!
Study!? Wait what does that involve?
Oh it's simple.
Hi hey!! What are you doing?
SNATCH!
EEEEYYAAAA AAAAAAAHHHHHH--
TOSS!
GLOM
Ha ha! Don't panic. I'm just holding you
NOW you can panic!!
SECRET!!
Mmf... Cottony.
What? I'm not actually **digesting** her.
That would be gross.

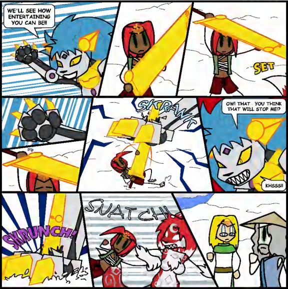
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #159

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


I see. At this size, you probably have a whole laboratory in your belly.
But you've miscalculated, Nova!
urp
Secret had a deadly soulsteel daiklave with her so you're go!
HAORK
Enough of this!
You spit her out NOW!
RE-FORM!
Aha ha! Trying again? What makes you think you can do any better?
Ah. But you have a new friend, right?
Yes.
klik!
My twin sister, Ragara Karen.
Dawn Caste.
Prrr
Alright. Let's play

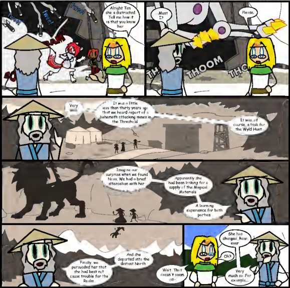
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #160

by Padraig O Ruanai


WE'LL SEE HOW ENTERTAINING YOU CAN BE!!
SET
grip
SKRAWK
OW! THAT - YOU THINK THAT WILL STOP ME!?
KHSSS!!
SKRUNCH!
SNATCH!

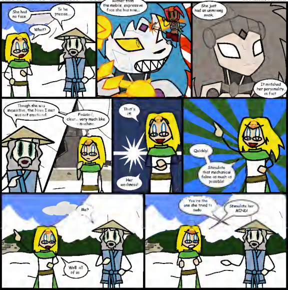
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #161

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


tweet!
tweet!
tweet!
Alright Ten she's distracted Tell me how it is that you knew her
Must I?
Please.
THOOM
THOOM
THO
Very well.
It was a little less than thirty years ago that we heard report of a behemoth attacking mines in the Threshold
It was, of course, a task for the Wyld Hunt
Imagine our surprise when we found Nova. We had a brief altercation with her
Apparently she had been looking for a supply of the Magical Materials
A learning experience for both parties
Finally, we persuaded her that she had best not cause trouble for the Realm
And she departed into the distant North
Wait. That doesn't seem qu-
She has changed, however
Oh?
Very much so. For example...

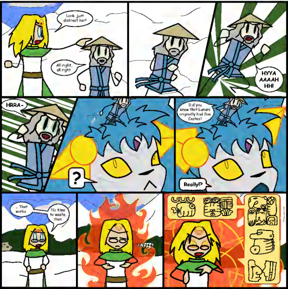
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #162

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


She had no face
To be precise...
What?
Rather than the mobile, expressive face she has now...
She just had an unmoving mask.
It matched her personality... in fact
Though she was inquisitive, the Nova I met was not emotional.
Focused, clear... very much like a machine.
That's it!
Her weakness!
Quickly!
Stimulate that mechanical feline as much as possible!
Me?
Well all of us
You're the one she tried to sadu
Stimulate her MIND!

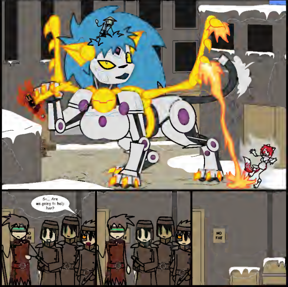
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #163

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Look, just distract her!
All right, all right.
HYYA AAAAH HH!
HRRA-
?
Did you know that Lunars originally had five Castes?
Really!?
... That works
No time to waste then
SNFFF

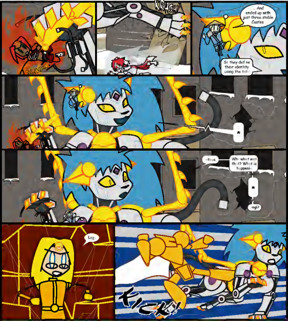
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #164

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


So... Are we going to help her?
NO FAE

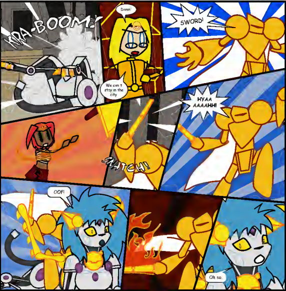
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #165

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


SLASH!
KRASH!
...And ended up with just three stable Castes
So they define their identity using the tat-
*
-tuss.
Wh- what was that? What is happeni-
*
-ng!?
Leg.
KICK!

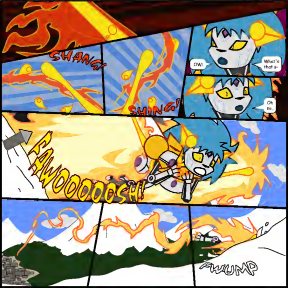
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #166

by Padraig O Ruanai


KRA-BOOM!
Dawn!
We can t stay in the city
SWORD!
HYAA AAAAHH!
SNATCH!
OOF!
Oh no.

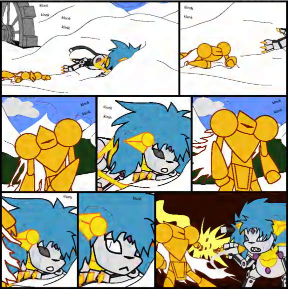
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #167

by Padraig Ó Ruanai


SHANG!
SHING!
OW!
What's that s-
Oh no.
FWOOOOOOSH!
FWUMP

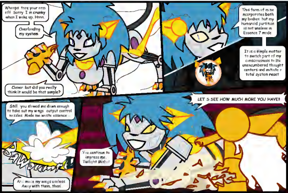
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #168

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI

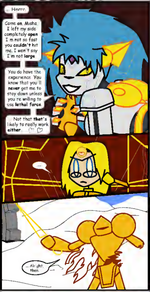

klonk
klank
klonk
klank
klonk
klank
klonk
klank
klank
klank
klank
klank
klank
klank

KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #169

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Whoops tore your arm off Sorry I m cranky when I wake up. Hnnn.
Overloading my system
Clever, but did you really think it would be that simple?
This form of mine incorporates both my bodies, but my humanoid partition is not useless in Essence 7 mode
It is a simple matter to switch part of my consciousness to its unencumbered thought centers and initiate a total system reset
Still, you slowed me down enough to take out my wings' output control nozzles. Made me waste essence...
SWOUMF!
And made my wings useless. Away with them, then!
You continue to impress me, Twilight Misha!
LET'S SEE HOW MUCH MORE YOU HAVE!!

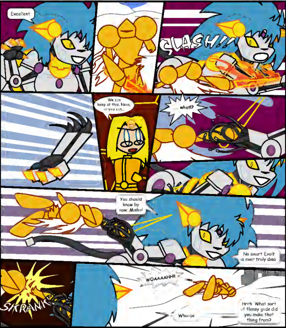
Keychain of Creation #170


... Hmrrr.
Come **on**, Misha. I left my side completely **open**. I'm not so fast you **couldn't** hit me. I won't say I'm not **large**.
You do have the experience. You know that you'll **never** get me to stay down unless you're willing to use **lethal force**.
Not that **that's** likely to really work **either**... ♡ ♡
...
... Alright, then.

by Padraig O Ruanai

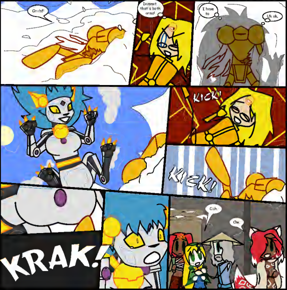
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #171

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Excellent
CLASH!!
We can keep at this, Nava, or you can...
. . . what!?
You should know by now, Masha!
No smart Exalt is ever truly disa
SKRANK!
WOAAAAHH!!
Whoops
Hrrh. What sort of flimsy gods did you make that thing from?

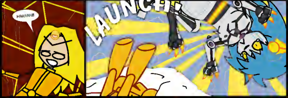
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #172

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Ooohf!
Dammit that's both arms!
I have to
Uh oh.
KICK!
KICK!
KRAK!
Ooh.
Ow.

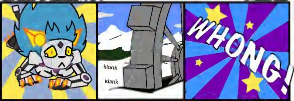
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #173

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


HRAAAAN!!
LAUNCH!

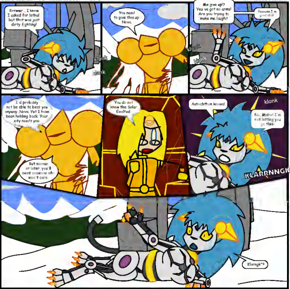
Keychain of Creation #174

by Padraig O Rhanai


klonk
klank
WHONG!

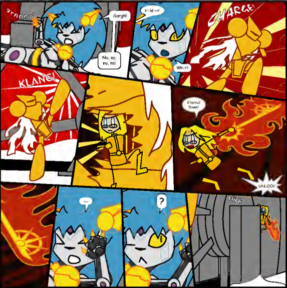
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #175

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Rrrwwr... I know I asked for lethal but that was just dirty fighting!
klonk
klank
You need to give this up Nova.
Me give up!? You've got no arms! Are you trying to make me laugh?
Because I'm good at it
klonk
klank
I'd probably not be able to beat you anyway, Nova. Yet I have been holding back. Your city needs you
But sooner or later, you'll meet someone who won't care.
You do not know the Solar Exalted
Autochthon knows!
klonk
No, Misha! I'm not letting you go this-
KLARRNNGK
Klarngk"?

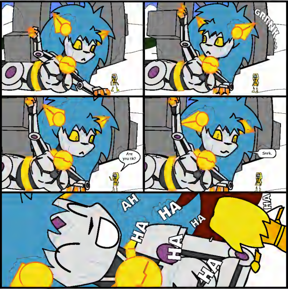
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #176

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI


grnnnn
Gargh!
Na, no, no, no!
Hold on!
What?
CHARGE!
KLANG!
Eternal Dawn!
UNLOCK!
...
?
click

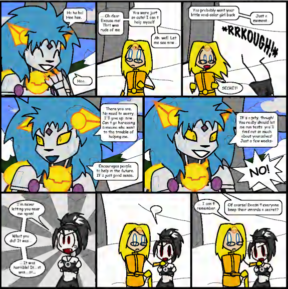
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #177

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


GRRNK...
Are you ok?
Snrk.
AH
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA

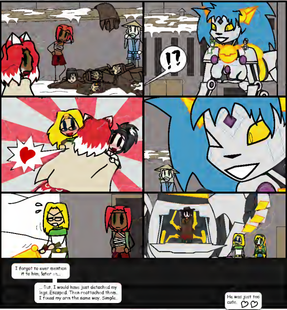
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #178

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Ho ho ho! Hee hee.
Hoo...
...Oh dear Excuse me! That was rude of me
You were just so cute! I can't help myself
Ah, well! Let me see now...
You probably want your little void-solar girl back
Just a moment.
RRKOUGH!
SECRET!
There you are. No need to worry. I'll give up, now. Can't go harassing someone who went to the trouble of helping me.
Encourages people to help in the future. It's just good sense.
It's a pity, though! You really should let me run tests, you'll find out so much about yourselves! Just a few weeks-
NO!
I'm never letting you near me again!
What you did! It was...
...It was horrible! It... it was... so...
...I can't remember...
Of course! Doesn't everyone keep their innards a secret?

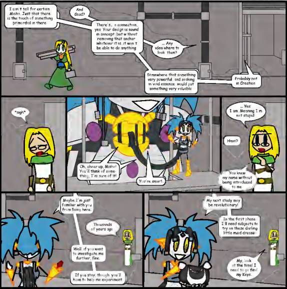
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #179

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


!?
I forgot to ever mention it to him, later on...
... But, I would have just detached my legs. Escaped. Then reattached them. I fixed my arm the same way. Simple.
He was just too cute. ♡♡

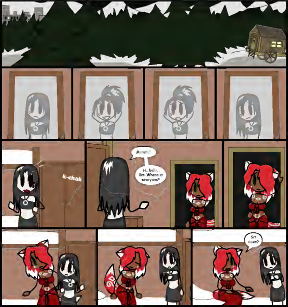
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #180

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


I can't tell for certain Misha. Just that there is the touch of something primordial in there
And dead?
There's... a connection... yes. Your design is sound in concept, but without removing that anchor whatever it is, it won't be able to do anything
... Any idea where to look, then?
Somewhere that something very powerful and seeking in void essence would put something very valuable
Probably not in Creation
sigh
Oh, cheer up, Misha! You'll think of something, I'm sure of it!
You're smart.
... Yes I am. Meaning I'm not stupid
Hmm?
You knew my name without being introduced to me
Maybe I'm just familiar with you from living here.
Thousands of years ago
Well, if you want to investigate me further, fine.
If you stay, though, you'll have to help me experiment.
My next study may be revolutionary!
In the first phase I'll need subjects to try on these darling little maid dresse
My, look at the time! I need to go find my Keys.

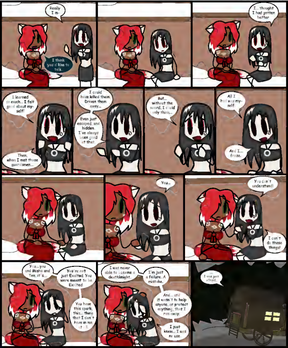
Keychain of Creation #181

by Padraig O Ruanai


k-chak
Merena!
H...hello. Um. Where is everyone?
Sit down?

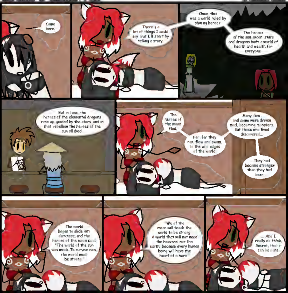
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #182

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Really I m-
I think you'd like to talk...
I... thought I had gotten better
I learned so much... I felt good about my-self!
Then, when I met those guardsmen...
I could have killed them. Driven them away...
Even just escaped, and hidden. I've always been good at that.
But... without the sword, I could only think...
All I had was my-self.
And I... froze.
You...
You don't understand!
I can't do these things!
You... you and Misha and Ten, it's...
You're not just Exalted. You were meant to be Exalted.
You have this spark, this... thing that I don't have in me at all.
I was never able to become a deathknight.
I'm just a failure. A mistake.
And... and it wasn't to help anyone, or protect anything, that I ran away.
I just knew... I was no use.
... I was just afraid.

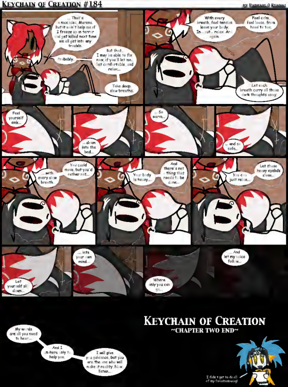
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #183

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Come here.
There's a lot of things I could say. But I'll start by telling a story.
Once this was a world ruled by shining heroes.
The heroes of the sun, moon, stars and dragons built a world of health and wealth for everyone.
But in time, the heroes of the elemental dragons rose up, guided by the stars, and in that rebellion the heroes of the sun all died.
The heroes of the moon fled.
Far, far they ran, flew and swam, to the wild edges of the world.
Many died, and some were driven mad, becoming monsters. But those who lived discovered...
...They had become stronger than they had been.
The world began to slide into darkness, and the heroes of the moon said: "The world of the sun was weak. To survive now, the world must be strong."
"We of the moon will teach the world to be strong. A world that will not need the heavens nor the earth, because every human being will have the heart of a hero."
... And I really do think, Secret, that it can be done.

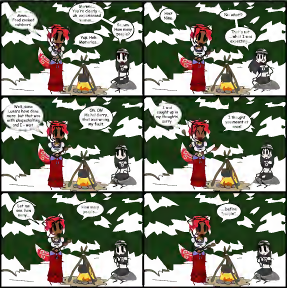
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #184

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


... That's a nice idea, Marena. But it won't help me if I freeze up in terror and get killed next time we all get into any trouble.
Probably.
But that.. I may be able to fix now, if you'll let me.. Get comfortable, and relax...
Take deep, slow breaths.
With every breath, feel tension leave your body. In... out... relax. And again.
Feel calm.. feel loose, from head to toe.
twitch
Let each breath carry all those dark thoughts away.
Feel yourself sink...
... down into the bed...
... So warm...
... and so safe...
... with every slow breath.
You could move, but you'd rather not...
Your body is heavy....
And there's not a thing that needs to be done...
You can just relax...
Let those heavy eyelids close...
Let yourself slip down...
... into your own mind...
Where only you can go...
... And let my voice follow...
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION
~CHAPTER TWO END~
My words are all you need to hear...
And I am here only to help you.
I will give you guidance, but you are the one who will make it reality. Now, listen...
I didn't get to do all of my foreshadowing!

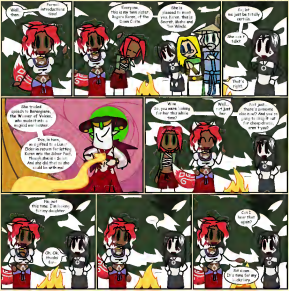
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #185

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Mmm... Food cooked outdoors
Mmmm... You're clearly a, uh, experienced woman...
Yup. Heh. Memories..
So, um. How many people?
Hm? Nine.
Ni- what!?
That's not ...what I was expecting...
Well, some Lunars have done more but that was with shapeshifting and I - wait
Oh. Oh! Ha ha! Sorry, that was wrong, my fault.
I was caught up in my thoughts sorry
I thought you meant at once!
Let me see, how many...
How many people...
...Define "people"..

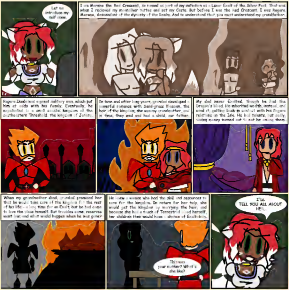
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #186

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Well, then.
Formal introductions time!
Everyone, this is my twin sister, Ragara Karen, of the Dawn Caste.
She is pleased to meet you, Karen, this is Secret, Misha and Ten Winds.
So, let me just be totally certain.
She can't talk?
That's right.
She traded speech to Berengiere, the Weaver of Voices, who made it into a magical war banner.
This, in turn, was gifted to a Lunar Elder in return for letting Karen into the Silver Pact, though she is a Solar. And she did that so she could be with me!
Wow So, you were looking for her this whole time?
Well... not just her.
Not just... there's someone else now!? And you're going to drag it out for cheap drama, aren't you?
No, not this time. I'm looking for my daughter.
Oh. Ok, thanks for–
...
Can I hear that again?
Sit down. It's time for my backstory.

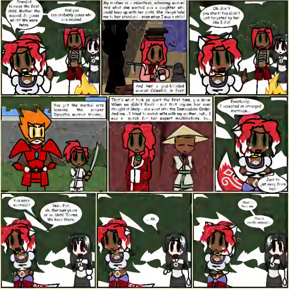
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #187

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Let me introduce myself anew.
I am Merena the Red Crescent, so named as part of my initiation as a Lunar Exalt of the Silver Pact. That was when I recieved my moonsilver tattoos and set my Caste. But before I was the Red Crescent, I was Ragara Merena, descendant of the dynasty of the Realm. And to understand that, you must understand my grandfather.
Ragara Ikeda was a great military man, which put him at odds with his family. Eventually, he expatriated to a small coastal kingdom of the southeastern Threshold, the kingdom of Janara.
In time and after long years, grandad developed a powerful romance with Sand-grass Blossom, the heir of the kingdom; she was my grandmother, and in time, they wed and had a child, our father.
My dad never Exalted, though he had the Dragon's blood. He inherited wealth, instead, and used it, getting back in contact with his Ragara relations on the Isle. He had talents, but sadly, saving money turned out to not be among them.
When my grandmother died, grandad promised her that he would take care of the kingdom for the rest of his life – a long time for an Exalt, but he had come to love the place himself. But troubles came, reserves went low, and what would happen when he was gone?
He knew a woman who had the skill and resources to care for the kingdom. In return for her help, she would get the kingdom by marrying the heir, and because she had a touch of Terrestrial blood herself, her children then would have a chance of Exaltation.
This was your mother? What's she like?
I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT HER.

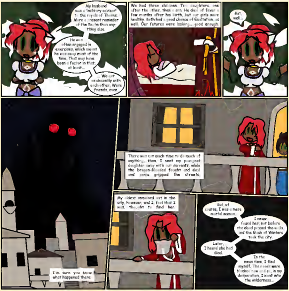
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #188

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI


Grandad to raise the first child. Mother the second. So guess what? We were twins.
And you can probably guess who was second.
My mother is a relentless, scheming woman! And what she wanted was a daughter who could keep up with her plots. She always held me to her standard - even when I was a child!
And her a god-blooded woman! Celestial, in fact!
Oh, don't you start! You didn't get targeted by her like I did!
You got the martial arts lessons, the proper Dynastic warrior training...
That's what took us apart the first time, you know. When we didn't Exalt - not that anyone had ever thought it likely - she went into the Immaculate Order. And me... I tried to match wits with my mother, but... I was no match for her expert machinations. So...
Eventually, I accepted an arranged marriage...
Just to get away from her.
You were married!?
Yes... For, ah, thirteen years or so. Until Thorns. We lived there.
... Ah.
Maidens help me.
This is really awkward...

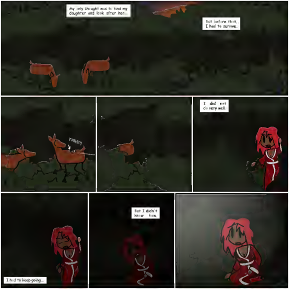
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #189

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


My husband was a "military advisor" to the royals of Thorns. More a present reminder of the Realm than anything else.
He was often engaged in exercises, which meant he was away most of the time. That may have been a factor in that, at least...
... We got on decently with each other. Were friends, even.
We had three children. Two daughters, one after the other, then a son. He died of fever a few months after his birth, but our girls were healthy. Both had a good chance of Exaltation, as well. Our futures were looking... good enough.
But, well...
There was not much time to do much of anything... then. I sent my youngest daughter away with our servants, while the Dragon-Blooded fought and died and panic gripped the streets.
I'm sure you know what happened there.
My oldest remained out in the city, however, and I, fool that I was, thought to find her.
But, of course, I was a mere mortal woman.
I never found her, not before the dead passed the walls, and the Mask of Winters took the city.
Later, I heard she had died.
In the mean time, I fled myself. The roads were blocked now and so, in my desperation, I went into the wilderness...

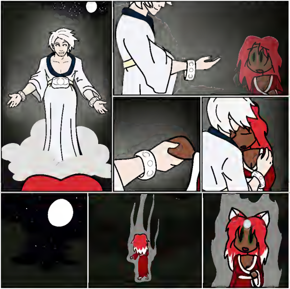
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #190

by Padraig O Ruanai


My only thought was to find my daughter and look after her...
But before that, I had to survive.
THWIP
I did not do very well.
I had to keep going...
But I didn't know how.

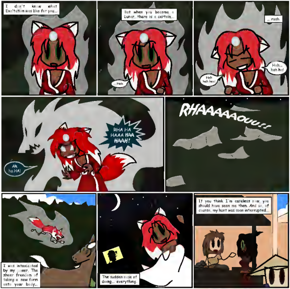
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #191

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI



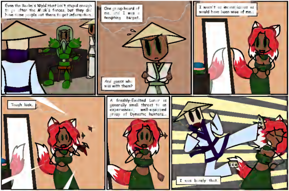
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #192

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


I don't know what Exaltation was like for you...
But when you become a Lunar, there is a certain...
...Heh
...rush.
Heh... heh ha!
Heh heh heh!
RHA HA HAAA HAA HAAH!
Ah ha HA!
RHAAAAAOUU!!
I was intoxicated by my power. The sheer freedom of taking a new form onto your body...
The sudden ease of doing... everything.
If you think I'm careless now, you should have seen me then. And so, of course, my hunt was soon interrupted...

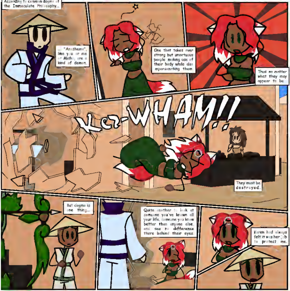
Keychain of Creation #193

by Padraig O Ruanai


Even the Realm's Wyld Hunt isn't stupid enough to go after the Mask's forces, but they did have some people out there to get information.
One group heard of me, and I was a tempting target.
And guess who was with them?
I wasn't as inconspicuous as would have been wise of me...
Tough luck.
A freshly-Exalted Lunar is generally small threat to an experienced, well-equipped group of Dynastic hunters...
I was barely that.

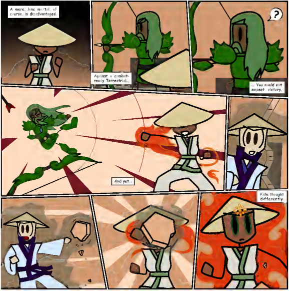
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #194

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


According to common dogma of the Immaculate Philosophy...
... "Anathema", like you or me or Misha, are a kind of demon.
One that takes over strong but unvirtuous people making use of their body while also impersonating them
Thus no matter what they may appear to be
KER-WHAM!!
They must be destroyed.
But dogma is one thing...
Quite another to look at someone you've known all your life, someone you know better than anyone else, and see no difference there behind their eyes.
Karen had always felt it was her job to protect me.

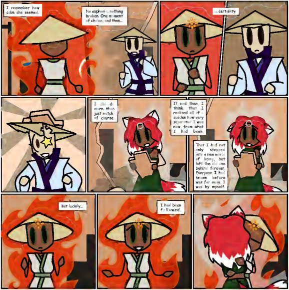
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #195

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


A mere, lone mortal, of course, is disadvantaged.
Against a combat-ready Terrestrial...
?
... You would not expect victory.
And yet...
Fate thought differently.

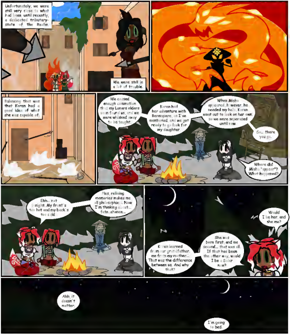
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #196

by Padraig Ó Ruanai

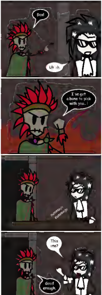

I remember how calm she seemed.
No euphoria, nothing broken. One moment of choice, and then...
...certainty.
I did do more than just watch, of course.
It was then, I think, that I realised all of a sudden how very separated I was now, from what I had been.
That I had not only stepped into a new world of being, but left the old one behind forever. Everyone I had known before was far away. I was by myself.
But luckily...
I had been followed.

KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #197

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI


Unfortunately, we were still very close to what had been until recently, a dedicated tributary-state of the Realm.
We were still in a lot of trouble.
Balancing that was that Karen had a good idea of what she was capable of.
We caused enough commotion that my Lunars elders soon found us, and we were whisked away to be taught.
Karen had her adventure with Berengiere, as I've mentioned, and we got ready to go look for my daughter.
When Misho appeared, however, he needed my help. Karen went out to look on her own, so we were seperated until now.
So... there you go.
Where did Misho "appear"? What happened?
Ehh... not tonight. My front's too hot and my back's too cold.
Plus, reliving memories makes me all philosophical. Now I'm thinking about... fate, chance...
Would I be her, and she me?
She was born first, and me second... that was all. If that had been the other way, would I be a Solar now?
Karen learned from our grandfather, me from my mother... That was the difference between us. And why that?
Ahh, it doesn't matter.
I'm going to bed.

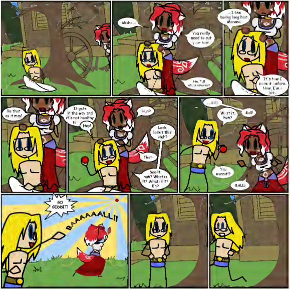
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #198


Ben!
Uh oh.
I've got a bone to pick with you..!
rummage rummage
This one?
Good enough.

BY PADRAIG O RUANAI

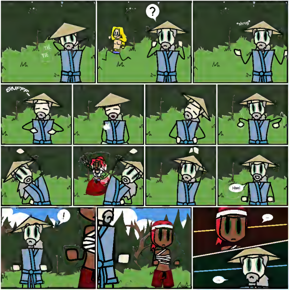
KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #199

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAI


Misha...
You really need to cut your hair.
Ha. Full Moon already?
...I like having long hair, Merana.
It's how I wore it before. Now, I'm a bit-
Be that as it may!
It gets in the way and it's not healthy to
Hey!
Huh?
Look lookit this! Huh?
That-
See it huh? What is it? What is it? Eh?
...Ball.
What it, huh?
Ball!
You wannit!?
BALL!
GO GEDDIT!
BAAAAAALL!!

KEYCHAIN OF CREATION #200

BY PADRAIG Ó RUANAÍ


TIE
TIE
?
shrug
SNFFF
Hm!
!
...
...